

Lessons from Yusufiyah: Module 08
“Diem: Unit Identity” (SSG John Diem)
Example Questions

[Watch “Diem: Unit Identity”]

1. Diem says, “Individuals should be seen as an indication of what their unit is.” A) What do you think of that statement? B) How is that related to the idea of a professional Soldier operating within the Army Profession?
2. What role does *esprit de corps* have in Diem’s idea of unit identity?
3. How can an individual Soldier or leader impact the identity of a unit? (Consider the impact to a unit of having a Medal of Honor recipient versus a war criminal.)
4. Diem talks about giving Soldiers titles like “warrior” and “combat killer.” A) What does Diem say are the negative implications of these terms? B) What do you think?
5. Consider some of the groups from history that you would call “warriors.” What are some of the positive attributes of those groups? Negative?
6. When we apply the term “warrior” to a Soldier, what expectations might we have for him/her? B) What might be the unintended associations?
7. Diem says that being a “combat killer or violent person” is not good in and of itself. A) What do you think he means by that statement? B) What is the “right” way to develop Soldiers who are ready and willing to kill on behalf of the nation? C) Does the Army naturally attract individuals who think that they want to kill? D) If so, how should Army leaders respond to these individuals?
8. Diem says it’s important for a unit to be “capable of acting even when things aren’t going its way.” What does he mean by this?
9. Consider a unit that has established standards and is well-disciplined. A) How would you expect that unit to act in combat? B) What effects does combat have on a unit’s discipline?
10. How can the Army, being large in numbers, ensure it is a disciplined organization from top to bottom?
11. What should leaders communicate to Soldiers about units that may have different – even conflicting – standards? B) What determines whether a unit has different standards or is actually undisciplined?
12. How are discipline and resilience related?

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Transcription

Diem tells his story:

John Diem is an Infantry noncommissioned officer. He has deployed several times to Iraq and Afghanistan with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and has seen heavy combat at the small unit level.

Individuals should be seen as an indication of what their unit is. So if you reward a Soldier a bronze star with valor, yes you are giving *that Soldier* an award—you are recognizing valor on the field—but primarily what you’re doing is showing that unit *this guy* has taken your identity and purified it given the right time, place, overall environment, and demonstrated who you as a group are. Does that make sense?

We can’t allow Soldiers to be overconfident or have an unrealistic expectation of battle, and that’s exactly what we do by calling everybody warriors—by allowing leaders to glorify being a combat killer or being a violent person. None of those things are good things in it of themselves. What you need is a very disciplined organization that is tough, that is very resilient, that is capable of acting even when things aren’t going its way; even when stuff is going very bad; even when contact is consistent, kinetic, and involves casualties on both sides.

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Additional Resources

Additional Resources

Pentagon Honors Medal of Honor Recipient, Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Petry

By: Luis Martinez

- At the ceremony, Petry said, "As you have recognized me today, I ask that you continue to pay tribute and never forget those Rangers and all other men and women of the armed services that have made the ultimate sacrifice," he said.
- Article: <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/pentagon-honors-medal-honor-recipient-sgt-1st-class/story?id=14066750#.T2zaoXhc-JU>

Medal of Honor recipient saved 36 lives during battle

By: Jim Michaels, *USA TODAY*

- "My best friends were in there getting shot at," he said.
- Meyer said he knew he was taking a chance by defying orders, but he never doubted his decision. "I'd rather be sitting in jail right now for the rest of my life for something like this and those guys be alive than ... questioning if I could have done something different," he said.
- Article: <http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/story/2011-09-06/Medal-of-Honor-recipient-saved-36-lives-during-battle/50288284/1>